



THE BROADCAST MONITORING COMPANY

BROADCAST REPORT

TEL: 0171-247 1166 FAX: 0171-377 6103

PASSIVE SMOKING

Programme : PETER DEELEY'S NEWSDAY
Station : LONDON NEWS
Date : 13/05/96
Time : 17:40

JOHN TERRETT: Presenter

New scientific research claims that passive smoking doesn't cause cancer. The highly controversial findings come from an international panel of scientists known as the European Working Group of Environment Tobacco Smoke and Lung Cancer. They say there's just no evidence that tobacco smoke in the air harms people nearby. Now what makes the panel's findings even more controversial is the fact that it was set up by tobacco manufacturers. The Chairman of the panel is Professor Geoffrey Idle of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Geoffrey, this contradicts everything that we have heard in recent years about the dangers of passive smoking.

Professor GEOFFREY IDLE: Panel Chairman, Passive Smoking Study

Well, just for the benefit of your listeners I would like just clarify something that you said. We didn't say that environmental tobacco smoke was harmless, all we did was consider the lung cancer risk caused by exposure to environmental tobacco smoke.

JOHN TERRETT:

Nonetheless though people tend to assume don't they that you can still get lung cancer by sitting in a smokey office?

Professor GEOFFREY IDLE:

Yes they do, and that's largely because of data which came out of the United States. The United States Environmental Protection Agency in 1992 branded environmental tobacco smoke as a primary lung carcinogen. And we've had the benefit of being a little bit up to date, having the last four years of new scientific studies and new ways of thinking in regulation, and our analysis does not share that, our analysis says that there is no reason to believe that environmental tobacco smoke causes lung cancer.



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JOHN TERRETT:

Now you say there's no proof of that, but on the other hand it is true to say isn't it that there is no proof that it doesn't.

Professor GEOFFREY IDLE:

That's right. In science you can never prove a negative and what we are saying... you have to make an evaluation of these things and that's what agencies do all the time when evaluating human safety for exposure for example in the workplace - exposure to chemicals in factories and in offices and so on and one must make a judgement at what level is it safe to be exposed to chemicals and we have applied exactly the same sort of risk analysis to the issue of environmental tobacco smoke and lung cancer.

JOHN TERRETT:

Well you and your panel are experts, no one doubts that, but doesn't the fact that you were commissioned by tobacco manufacturers to carry out this survey, doesn't that devalue the findings?

Professor GEOFFREY IDLE:

No, not at all. That's a question which has come up and I expect will come up many times in the future, I don't entertain being in this kind of work, or any kind of work in fact, unless one is guaranteed complete independence. When I agreed to chair this panel in the middle of last year I insisted, and I think I speak for the whole rest of the panel too, that we would have complete independence and no interference from the tobacco company whatsoever and that whatever we found we reserved the right to publish our report, and that is what we've done, we've released the report today.

JOHN TERRETT:

Have you had any reaction yet from the medical world, and indeed from cancer charities?



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Professor GEOFFREY IDLE:

No. The report was released this morning after a press briefing here in London and I guess the fall-out will occur over the next few weeks.

JOHN TERRETT:

You'd expect there to be some adverse fall-out?

Professor GEOFFREY IDLE:

Well, naturally. I mean people take the perceived wisdom that environmental tobacco smoke is a lung carcinogen and there really is no evidence to demonstrate that at all. And we applied a weighted evidence approach in our risk analysis, taking in considerations and data from many different corners of science and our evaluation is that there's no cause for concern as far as lung cancer is concerned.

JOHN TERRETT:

Professor Geoffrey Idle of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, thank you.

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